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## THE MENORAT HA-MAOR

### TIME AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION.

By ISRAEL EFROS, Johns Hopkins University.

CONCERNING the Menorat ha-Maor of Isaac Aboab, very little has been written so far. All we have is a brief essay by Zunz on the authorship of the book.<sup>1</sup> And yet the book is surely a promising subject for scientific research. Much for example might be gathered from an examination of its references to the Jerushalmi, regarding the latter's textual history; or from a comparison of its copious quotations from the Midrashim for the history of Midrashic literature. Jewish science still has much to unravel and to illuminate. My present purpose is merely to determine the date and place of its authorship.

That the book—which for brevity sake we will call ‘Menorah’—was composed by a man named Isaac Aboab,<sup>2</sup> is evident from the introductory poem חסר האל the acrostic of which yields יצחק אבוהב.<sup>3</sup> But who is that Isaac

<sup>1</sup> See *Ritus*, pp. 205-10.

<sup>2</sup> The name is Arabic **أبو هب**, and it was so originally pronounced; but already in the sixteenth century we find a scion of that family, Imanuel, signing his name in the Spanish book *Nomologia*, and elsewhere, Aboab. Cf. *JQR.*, X, 130, and Loenstein, *Die Familie Aboab*.

<sup>3</sup> The poem was apparently composed by some one else; otherwise the acrostic would have been in the first person, viz. **אני יצחק אבוהב**. That the closing hemistichs give us the words **לרבי אברהם זלה"ה**, was already noticed by Meyer Wiener (cf. *Ha-Maggid*, IV, 32), who surmised that the poem was probably dedicated to the memory of a certain R. Abraham—

Aboab? Is he to be identified with the disciple of Isaac Campanton, bearing the same name, who died in the year following the Spanish Expulsion? A chronicler of the sixteenth century, גדליה בן יחייא, answers the question affirmatively. In his 'inauthentic history' called שלשלת הקבלה he states ר' יצחק אבוהב חכם גדול ונפטר בפורטוגאל שנת רצ"ג (צ"ל רנ"ג) ז' חדשים אחר הגרוש והיו לו ששים שנה והיה מתלמידי ר"י קנפנמין הנזכר והוא חבר ספר מנורת המאור. This opinion was not called into question down to the end of the eighteenth century, when Azulai, in his שם הגדולים, noticing that Abraham Zacuto speaks of Isaac Aboab the author of the Menorah, without mentioning him as his teacher, began to doubt the validity of this ascription. At last a scientific investigation was attempted by Zunz, who reached the conclusion that our author lived not at the end of the fifteenth century, but in the year 1300 or latest in 1320.

Now instead of proceeding with our date-inquiry, let us first examine the sources of our book and the problem as to the place of its composition. The logic of this method of procedure will reveal itself, I trust, in the course of the discussion.

entirely an unwarranted suggestion. Besides, the poem bears no dedicatory character; it is no description of the addressee, which would usually be the case. To my mind, the opening and the closing hemistichs give us one complete statement of the author חיבור יצחק אבוהב לרבי אברהם זל"ה (perhaps the initial word of the first closing hemistich should be בירורשי, the fourth word in the acrostic therefore being ברבי) i. e. Isaac Aboab, son of R. Aboab. This is highly significant; for in addition to giving us the name of our author's father, it also furnishes us with a clue to the date-problem. Identifying this R. Abraham with R. Abraham Aboab mentioned in the Responsa of R. Judah b. Asher entitled *Zikron Jehudah*, p. 53, we come to the conclusion that Isaac Aboab lived at the end of the fourteenth century; more of which later.

## I. THE SOURCES OF THE MENORAH.

The Menorah can by no means be called an original production. Just a cursory glance will impress one with its mosaic and eclectic character. It is a collection of legendary stories and moralistic passages, topically arranged, gleaned from the two Talmudim<sup>4</sup> and the Midrashim. Of the latter, mention is made of the Midrash Rabba,<sup>5</sup> Mekilta,<sup>6</sup> Sifre,<sup>7</sup> Chapters of R. Eliezer,<sup>8</sup> Tanḥuma,<sup>9</sup> Pesikṭa,<sup>10</sup> Ekah Rabbati,<sup>11</sup> Midrash Tehillim,<sup>12</sup> Midrash Mishle,<sup>13</sup> Midrash Shir ha-Shirim,<sup>14</sup> Midrash Zephaniah,<sup>15</sup> Midrash Kohelet.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The references to the Babylonian Talmud are too numerous to be mentioned; quotations from the Palestinian Talmud are found in chs. 51, 52, 100, 106 (here the Jerushalmi is referred to by its older title נמרא רבני (מערבא), 108, 111, 113, 120, 131, 142, 151, 162, 270.

<sup>5</sup> For quotations from Bereshit Rabba see chs. 81, 92, 105, 131, 138, 155, 159, 170, 181, 186, 194, 205, 238, 254, 276, 284, 300; for Shemot Rabba, see chs. 29, 86, 92, 96, 101, 195, 224, 248, 297, 312, 329; for Vaikra Rabba, see chs. 50, 69, 96, 148, 149, 151, 153, 158, 195, 198, 254, 332; for Bamidbar Rabba, see chs. 133, 170, 313; for Debarim Rabba, see chs. 51, 96, 111, 192, 222, 223, 225, 247, 296.

<sup>6</sup> See chs. 52, 142, 146, 155, 159, 225, 237, 243, 292, 294.

<sup>7</sup> See chs. 1, 41, 51, 64, 96, 123, 126, 144, 198, 223, 232, 253, 265, 275, 298, 329.

<sup>8</sup> See chs. 43, 45, 52, 80, 96, 100, 111, 113, 131, 159, 173, 201, 205, 215, 238, 275, 279, 284, 290, 296.

<sup>9</sup> See chs. 2, 41, 88, 95, 96, 106, 123, 129, 133, 140, 142, 192, 213, 238, 253, 254, 290.

<sup>10</sup> See chs. 92, 97, 101, 118, 141, 149, 150, 153, 154, 166, 192, 230, 275, 279, 282, 284, 291, 293.

<sup>11</sup> See chs. 286, 304, 305, 310.

<sup>12</sup> See chs. 1, 17\*, 89, 102, 105, 170, 172\*, 208, 282, 288\*, 312, 329. The star on some of the foregoing references indicates that they are missing in Buber's list in his introduction to the Midrash Tehillim, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> See chs. 11, 53, 64, 136, 246.

<sup>14</sup> See chs. 80 (here it is named 'Hasita'), 238.

<sup>15</sup> Ch. 171.

<sup>16</sup> Chs. 181, 253.

Of the rarer Midrashim, mention is made of the Midrash Hashkem,<sup>17</sup> no longer extant; of the Ḥupat Elijah Rabba,<sup>18</sup> and of the Sefer Hekalot. The last quotation is noteworthy. In ch. 93, he states *וכתוב בספר היכלות שיש בו* (i. e. in the prayer 'Baruk Sheamar') *פ"ז תבות והסימן ראשו כחם פו*, but the passage is not found in our fragmentary Sefer Hekalot. Jellinek, in his introduction to *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. II, has collected a number of quotations not found in our Hekalot. Furthermore, it is well known that there existed another Hekalot, surnamed Zutaṛta, mentioned in some Gaonic responsa attributed to Hai.<sup>19</sup> It seems strange, however, that a prayer based on certain lines in the Seder Elijah Zuta, chapter 4, a work of the middle of the tenth century, should be referred to as having attained definite form and containing a fixed number of words in the Hekalot which is somewhat older. The fact is that the fixation of the number of words along with the mnemonic symbol is given by the author of the Roḳeah, who seems to be the first source. Hence I think that the author of the Menorah borrowed this passage from the Roḳeah, and

<sup>17</sup> See chs. 30, 51, 222, 225, 229. Zunz in his *Ritus*, p. 205, advances this as a proof for the earlier date of the Menorah, since the 'mention of Midrash Hashken ceases with Israel Alnaqua'. In his *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*, p. 294, he evidently corrects himself and states that this Midrash was known until the end of the fifteenth century. Yet even the latter statement is not quite exact; the Midrash Hashkem is mentioned in the Reshit Ḥokmah by Elijah de Vidas, who lived at the end of the sixteenth century. See S. Buber's *Introduction to Midrash deḳaḥ Ṭob*, Wilna, 1880, p. 21a. Be it also noted that this Midrash is never mentioned in the Menorah by its other name, Wehizhir. Cf. Zunz's *Gesammelte Schriften*, pp. 251 ff., and Geiger's *Jüd. Zeitschrift*, 1875, p. 95 *et seq.*

<sup>18</sup> See ch. 201. This fragment is not found in the fragments of the Ḥupat Elijah Rabba, contained in the Reshit Ḥokmah.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ṭaam Zekenim, p. 56, and Teshubot ha-Geonim, Lyck, 99. As for their ascription to Hai, see my essay in the Hashiloah, XXX, 463 ff.

mistook the origin to be Midrashic; though strangely enough the Roḳeah is nowhere mentioned in the Menorah. It shows, however, that our author knew of the *Sefer Hekalot*.

It is to be noted that in those places where Aboab gives his source very vaguely—as ‘it is said in a Midrash’—his first hand knowledge of the source is questionable. The story about the tailor who outrivalled the magistrate in bidding high prices for a good-sized fish on the day before Yom Kippur—a story quoted from ‘a Midrash’ (ch. 295), is really taken from the *Ṭur* on the laws pertaining to the Day of Atonement, as we shall subsequently see. The story of Abahu complaining on his death-bed of his lack of social activity (ch. 228), is taken verbatim from Israel Alnaqua’s ‘Menorah’.<sup>20</sup> His statement that Adam was given the law of female menses along with his homiletical interpretation of the verse in Genesis: ‘I will make him a help suitable for him’ (ch. 180) is found in the *Sefer ha-Musar*, which, as Dr. Schechter has proven, is a mere paraphrase of Alnaqua’s ‘Menorah’.<sup>21</sup> His quotation from ‘a Midrash’ *זכור בים ושומר כיבשה* is found in the Semag of R. Moses of Coucy, who writes *יש מדרש זכור בים ושמעתי כי יש מדרש זכור בים ושומר כיבשה* (סי'כ"). The idea is contained in the *Pesikṭa* to the Ten Commandments as follows: *אמר אייבו זכור נתן ליורדי הים שאינם יודעים אם באיסור הם מטללים אם בהיתר הם מטללים שמור נתן ליושבי היבשה*. It is obvious that the author borrowed his quotation not from the *Pesikṭa* but from the Semag. In ch. 113, he copied verbatim from the *Ṭur*, § 292, in explaining the cryptic meaning of the three Sabbatical Amidahs.<sup>22</sup> In ch. 103, he cites a ‘Midrash’ concerning

<sup>20</sup> פרק הריינין. <sup>21</sup> Cf. Schechter in the *Monatsschrift*, XXXIV, 114 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Compare Tosafot to Hagigah, p. 3 b.

swaying to and fro during prayer; whilst the true source is the *Sefer ha-Manhig*, whence the extract. Similarly, his 'Midrashic' quotation forbidding one to sit within a certain area of a man that is praying, is really an extract from the *Tur*; and his 'Midrashic' story about the sagacious woman who offered instructions to her daughter before the nuptial ceremonies as to the position of the husband in a household—a story which Zunz calls a 'strange Midrash', but which is strongly reminiscent by its very style of late moralistic literature, is literally copied from Israel Alnaqua's 'Menorah'.<sup>23</sup>

We see, then, that our author's range of reading was not exclusively Midrashic. He made considerable use of Gaonic and later Rabbinic writings. The earliest Gaon mentioned is Jehudai Gaon (ch. 297). He was familiar with Amram Gaon's 'Siddur' (ch. 97). He quotes a responsum of Hai and another one by 'a Gaon' which likewise means Hai,<sup>24</sup> but these two quotations are borrowed from the Rosh at the end of Tractate Rosh ha-Shanah.<sup>25</sup> In ch. 293, Aboab quotes וגם כתוב בתשובות הרב ר' יצחק ז' נאות סי' קע"ה קע"ו.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ch. 176. It is not found in the fragmentary remains of Alnaqua's *Menorah* contained in the *Reshit Hokmah*, but in the Bodleian MS. See נחל קדומים by Dukes, II, 61; also *Rabbinische Sprachkunde*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Alfasi would refer to Hai as 'the Gaon', see Hashiloah, *l. c.*, p. 560, note 3.

<sup>25</sup> Indeed the greater part of ch. 290, from the words כמו שמצינו בפרקי דרבי אליעזר is literally from the Rosh, some parts omitted. Furthermore, the whole passage in the Rosh is reproduced in the *Tur*, § 981, but the *Menorah*-passage bears greater resemblance to the Rosh. That he did not ignore the *Tur*, however, is evident from the fact that he adopts the reading of the *Tur* ב"ה אלול בכל שנה וכל החדש instead of the reading of the Rosh, which is only ב"ה אלול בכל שנה. The reason for Aboab's adoption of the *Tur*'s reading will appear in the sequel.

<sup>26</sup> The text is apparently corrupt. It reads: וגם כתוב בתשובות בשם הרב ר' יצחק ז' נאות סימן קע"ה קע"ו רב עמרם ורבנו סעדיה ורבנו

Unless the word 'Teshubot' is used in a very loose sense, it would seem that Gayyat's 'Shaare Simḥah', where the quotation occurs, was originally a collection of responsa. His extract from the 'Teshubot ha-Geonim', in ch. 297, is found in the שערי תשובה, 10, 67.

More numerous are his references to Rabbinic literature. The מגילת סתרים<sup>27</sup> of the famous R. Nissim of Kairwan, is mentioned twice (chs. 95, 133); but in both cases it is highly doubtful whether Aboab used the original source. The fact is that both quotations are reproduced in the Manhig, which drew as freely from the מגילת סתרים<sup>28</sup> as our book drew from the Manhig. Thus Zunz's argument that our author must have lived at an early period since he still used the מגילת סתרים loses its cogency. Our book furthermore mentions Rashi, the Rashbam's commentary on Baba batra (ch. 1), Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch (ch. 95), and Alfassi (chs. 60, 129). The anonymous quotation in the introduction, introduced with the expression ואמרו עליו, is found in the Eshkol of Abraham b. Isaac Ab Bet Din of Narbonne. Maimonides, apparently a favourite

האי שהיו נוהגים בימיהם להריע נ"כ אחר סיום התפלה נמי תקיעה וג' שברים כדי לערכב השמן. Evidently the word בשם belongs before רב עמרם; while the word נמי is an error; it should be בלא. Cf. Tosafot on Rosh ha-Shanah, 33 b: וכן בסדר רב עמרם אלא שכתב דבסוף מריע: תרועה אחת בלא תקיעה.

<sup>27</sup> This title was apparently at one time a favourite among Jewish authors. Aboab mentions in the introduction a work by Sherira bearing the same name. Cf. Rapaport's biography of R. Nissim, note 25.

<sup>28</sup> See Cassel in Zunz's *Jubelschrift*, pp. 131-33. To his list of quotations from the מגילת סתרים in the Manhig may be added the one relative to Aaron and the dedication of the tabernacle, which occurs in the Manhig, though the source is there omitted. Cf. Nahmanides' commentary on the Pentateuch, Num. 8. 2. Be it also noted that ch. 95 in our Menorah contains many passages that are strongly reminiscent of the passage on the Kaddish in the Orhot Hayyim and in the Kol Bo.



with Aboab, was honoured with eleven direct, beside a number of indirect references.<sup>29</sup> There are quotations from his Mishnah commentary (chs. 60, 334), from his Code (chs. 71, 294, 312, 316), and from his Guide (ch. 79, 149, 221, 237, 300). The latter work he designated as the ספר הנכבד, showing that the famous anti-Maimonidean disturbance must have subsided in his day and the popular sentiment settled in favour of the great Jewish thinker. Coming to post-Maimonidean writers, we find references to Abraham b. Nathan of Lunel, whose Manhig was extensively used though only in two places acknowledged (ch. 80, 82); to Naḥmanides' commentary (chs. 133, 152); to the latter's 'Iggeret ha-Ḳodesh', which, with a few insignificant modifications, is entirely incorporated in the Menorah (chs. 181-5);<sup>30</sup> to an unknown work entitled 'Ḥaye Olam'<sup>31</sup>; to Anatoli's 'Malmad' (ch. 93); to the Semag of Moses of Coucy, which again, as we already noticed, was freely used though mentioned only once (ch. 155); and to Ibn Latīf's kabbalistic work entitled 'Shaar ha-Shamaim' (chs. 237, 292). The ethical literature is further represented by the Mibḥar ha-Peninim, the Musere ha-Pilosophim, and the Mishle Shu'alim, all of which are not mentioned by name but anonymously referred

<sup>29</sup> His theory that high intellectual attainments result from the predominance of the dry element in the physical constitution of man, is a literal plagiarism from Maimonides' 'Shemoneh Peraḳim', ch. 8.

<sup>30</sup> This plagiarism is mentioned in Brill's *Jahrbücher*, II, 166. Steinschneider, however, in his *Hebräische Bibliographie*, 1876, p. 89, unwilling to charge our author with literary larceny, is rather inclined to doubt Naḥmanides' authorship of the 'Iggeret ha-Ḳodesh'; but Naḥmanides was not the only man whose works won our author's affections.

<sup>31</sup> This work is also mentioned by Alnaqua. Cf. Schechter in the *Monatsschrift*, XXXIV, 125. See also תולדות גדולי ישראל and the Bodleian Catalogue, p. 1426.

to, viz.: חכמי המוסר or חכמי המחקר אמרו.<sup>32</sup> The last author whose name is found in the Menorah is Asher b. Jehiel, who is mentioned in two places only (chs. 94, 97), but has been utilized, as we already observed, in many more.

Yet the sources of our book do not terminate with the Rosh; indeed it will not be hard to detect traces of later writers in the Menorah. I have already given one or two examples where Aboab drew upon the Ṭur; I shall now cite a few more. In ch. 132, the tractate Soferim is quoted regarding the sanctification of the New Moon, and the same quotation is given in the Ṭur, §426; but in both cases a certain part of the talmudical passage quoted is omitted and at the end the following is added וי"א בזה הסדר ברוך ויוצרך ברוך עושך ברוך קונך ברוך בוראך וסימן יעקב והיא רמו לו. Evidently one of them, of the Ṭur and the Menorah, copied the other and not the tractate Soferim.<sup>33</sup> That it was the author of the Menorah who copied from the Ṭur can be seen from the fact that he uses the final words וסימן יעקב

<sup>32</sup> The epigram סודו של אדם יהי מסור בידו כעבר אבל אם יגלה יהי סודו של אדם, occurring in ch. 49, was apparently a favourite among Jewish authors. It is found in the משלי שועלים and in the מבחר הפנינים, and is copied in Kalaz's ספר המוסר. The poet Joseph Ezobi sings in a slightly different form:

אסירך הוא ואם ימסר אסורו תהי נפשך בידו אסורה

The saying ממופת החכמים מיעוט הדברים (ch. 59) is analogous to the expression כ"ו, בן המלך והנזיר in כשירבה השכל ימעט הרבון. The proverb תחלת מחשבה סוף מעשה is borrowed from Bahye's commentary on the Pentateuch (פרשת תזריע), written in 1291. See Winter u. Wünsche, *Jüdische Litteratur*, II, 321.

<sup>33</sup> The reading in tractate Soferim, according to many early authorities, viz.: Manhig, Roḳeah, Kol Bo, was apparently ברוך בואך ברוך יוצרך מקדשך, and such indeed is the reading in the Basle edition of Soferim of 1580; however the current editions vary.

כל'י שחלבנה רומח as a *text, commenting* upon it והיא רמו לו לעקב. Another example we find in ch. 131, where he introduces a reason for the custom prevalent among Jewish women not to work on the New Moon, with the words ויש אומרים, the passage being literally transcribed from the Ṭur, § 417, where the author tells us that he learned the reason from his brother R. Judah. In ch. 295, our author cites a story of the King who commanded his only son to fast on a certain day and ordered his servants to entertain the prince with a festival on the preceding day so as to alleviate the fasting, the source of this story being the Ṭur, § 439. His explanation of the solemnity of Hoshanah Rabba, לפי שבחג נידונין על המים והכל הולך אחר החתום, is also literally taken from the Ṭur, § 664. These examples will suffice to show that the Ṭur was not an inconsiderable source for our author who did not find it appropriate, however, to express acknowledgement and indebtedness. The idea of individual ownership in the domain of intellect was still unknown.

Even a later writer than the author of the Ṭur was exploited by Aboab for his work—I refer to Israel Alnaqua, who died the death of a martyr together with R. Judah b. Asher in Toledo, in the year 1391. His book, a namesake of our Menorah, has not seen the light yet; only a part has been published by Elijah de Vidas in his work called 'Reshit Ḥokmah'. Hence a full comparison of the two works is as yet impossible. But comparing the published fragments of Alnaqua's work with our Menorah, we arrive at the conclusion: first, that the one must have made use of the other: and secondly, that it is our author who utilized Israel Alnaqua's collection. Let us take for example Alnaqua's chapter on Judges and chapter 222 to

230 in our Menorah, and we shall see that both begin with the same excerpt from the Midrash and avail themselves of the same quotations in the course of the discussion, and make the same comments. In some places indeed our Menorah becomes a splendid summary of Alnaqua's book, an abridged edition. I cannot resist quoting one rather lengthy passage :

## Aboab, ch. 86.

וצרין אדם לזוהר שלא יוציא  
דבר מגונה מפיו בפני בנו וכ"ש שלא  
לעשותו כדי שלא ילמד בנו ממנו  
אבל ישתדל להרחיקו מן הכיעור ומן  
הדומה לו אפילו שלפעמים נוגע בו  
האב יזהר יותר מפני בנו אבל  
יקרבנו למדת החסידים וירחקנו מן  
האיבה והקנאה והמריבה ואם יחרפהו  
אדם או יבהו יעלים הרבר מבנו כדי  
שלא יכנים עצמו בסכנה בקנאת  
כבוד אביו. אמרו מעשה בחסיד  
שהיה מתוכח עם חברו בשערה אצל  
הדיינין והיה בנו אצלו והיה בעל דינו  
מחרפו ומגדפו ואומר לו עשית כך  
וכך והיה אומר דברים מגונים  
ומכוערים עד מאד שמע בנו חרה  
אפו ובקש להתקומט עם אותו איש  
בעל דינו של אביו. וכשהרגיש  
אביו בדבר א"ל בני למה חרה לך  
אם אמת היה הרבר ועשיתי אלה  
הדברים המכוערים שאומר עלי

## Alnaqua on Education.

וצריך אדם לזוהר ביותר ולשמור  
פיו ולשונו שלא ידבר בפני בנו בדבר  
מגונה וכ"ש לעשותו ואעפ"י שהוא  
מגונה אם עשהו בפני הבן או שלא  
בפניו מ"מ יותר מגונה הוא האב אם  
דבר או עשה דבר מגונה בפני בנו  
שמא ילמד בנו ממנו אם יאמר לו  
האב למה עשית כך וכך יאמר לו  
הבן והלא כך וכך עשית אתה וע"ז  
אמר הנביא התקוששו וקושו פי'  
קשוט עצמך ואח"כ קשוט אחרים.  
ואם ישמע האב דבר מגונה שעשו  
אחרים יתעבנו מאד בפני הבן ויפליג  
בגנותו ויאמר תבא קללה על פלוני  
שעשה כך וכך ועל כל העושה  
כמעשהו כדי שיתגנה הרבר בעיני הבן  
ויתרחק ממנו ומכיוצא בו ואם ישמע  
דבר משובח שעשו אחרים כגון  
למוד או כתיבה נאה או כיוצא בהם  
ישבחנו מאד בעיני בנו ויאמר כמה  
נאה דבר זה שעשה פלוני וסופו

לירש מעלה עליונה הואיל והוא עשה דבר נחמד כזה ויפליג בשבחו כדי שישמע הבן ויתאוו לעשות גם הוא דבר נאה כמותו סוף דבר ישתדל להרחיק את בנו מן הכיעור ומן הדומה לו ויקרבנו למדת החסידים והישרים כגון כשיקום האב בבוקר לתפלה שיליך לבנו עמו לב"ה וכן כשילך לנמול חסדים כגון בקור חולים והכנסת כלה והוצאת המת וכיוצא באלו יוליך לבנו עמו כדי

שירגילנו בג"ח ובעשית המצוות וכשיעשה האב מצוה מן המצוות יעשה אותה בעצמו כגון סוכה ולולב וכיוצא בהם יקשור הלולב בידו ויראה לבנו וילמדנו לעשות כך . . . ישתדל האב לפרוש מן הקנאה והאיבה והאיבה והתחרות אם בן אדם יחרפהו או יקללהו בפני בנו שלא יחרה אף הבן ויתקוטט עמו בשביל אביו ואפשר שיהרוג או שיהרג ונמצא האב גורם לבנו מיתה משונה או מביאו לידי בזיון. ואם יארע לאב שום מריבה עם אדם ויחרפהו יסבול ויכסה הדבר שמא ישמע בנו ויבא לידי סכנה מעשה בחסיד אחד שהיה מתוכח עם חברו בשער אצל החכמים והיה בנו אצלו מחרף ומגרף אותו. ואומר לו עשית כך וכך והיה מספר בגנותו ואומר בשבילו דברים מכוערים מאד ושמע בנו וחרה אפו עד מאד לכבוד אביו ובקש להתקוטט עם אותו האיש בעל דינו של אביו כשהרגיש אביו אמר לו למה חרה לך אז אמת דברים שהוא אומר שאנו עשיתי דברים מכוערים ומגונים כאלו למה תקוטט עמו אני הוא שעשיתי שלא כדין ראוי אני לשמוע חרפות וקללות מפי אדם על כל מעשי הרעים ואם לא עשיתי אותם הדברים המכוערים שאמר למה תחוש לדברים בטלים הניח לו ויאמר והש"ת יודע הנסתר יודע שלא עשיתי ושאני נקי מכל הדברים שהוא אומר בשבילי ושהוא אומר שוא ודברי כזב.

I have overlined all the passages in Alnaqua's column

that constitute the excerpt from our work. Notice how skilfully our author was able to present the essence of another's ideas in their original garb though not with their original label. Notice furthermore that the story about the saint and his son introduced in our Menorah with the expression 'some one said' is evidently original with Alnaqua. Another idea which Aboab introduces with the words 'some one said': namely, that 'the salvation which the children may bring to the parents is greater than the salvation which the parents may render to their children' (ch. 87), is also taken from Alnaqua's chapter on education.

This, I think, will suffice to prove that Aboab freely drew upon Alnaqua's work; and here ends our investigation into the sources of the Menorah. The subject that now invites our attention is the place of its composition.

## 2. PLACE OF COMPOSITION.

That Isaac Aboab, the author of the Menorah, lived in Spain, no one seems to doubt. Why should one doubt when the title-page clearly reads *יצחק אבוהב הספרדי*? And apparently there is nothing in the book to prove the contrary. In fact, the book seems to be remarkably deficient in what is known as local colour. Yet there is something that proves the contrary. Aboab's references to prevailing customs and rites leave us no doubt that he did not live in Spain, but in France. The following references to Minhagim in the Menorah will confirm the truthfulness of this statement.

In ch. 93, our author speaks of the significance of the prayer called Baruk Sheamar which is to be said before the

Psalms.<sup>34</sup> Now the author of the *Manhig* states that the French custom was to say Baruk Sheamar before the Psalms on a week day as well as on a Sabbath, but according to the custom in Spain and in the Provence, the Psalms preceded Baruk Sheamar on a Sabbath. Our author, making no distinction in this case, evidently followed the French ritual.

In ch. 103, he brings a passage from the Midrash—which he found in the *Manhig*—about swaying to and fro during prayer, and remarks *וכן מנהג החסידים*, while the *Manhig* adds *וכן מנהג רבני צרפת וחסידיה*.

In ch. 152, in connexion with Hoshanah Rabba, our author writes: *ומדבין בסעודתו כמו ביו"ט ומוסיפין בו מזמורים ונרות*. Now Abraham of Lunel tells us that in France, in Provence, and in Allemania additional Psalms were recited on Hoshanah Rabba, but not in Spain. In view of this, how can one claim that our author lived in Spain? He also tells us that lighting candles on that day was purely a French custom.<sup>35</sup>

In ch. 286,<sup>36</sup> our author states that it is customary to

<sup>34</sup> וגם הקנו בהקדמת התהלות ברוך שאמר . Now see *Manhig* (Berlin, 1855), p. 10a: *כל בשבת לפני כל . . . ומנהג ספרד ופרובנצא להתחיל בשבת ויו"ט אחרי הברכות המזמורים*. It is to be noted that Aboab's quotation from the *Malmad* is also given by Abudraham; and yet close examination will reveal that Aboab in this case drew from the original.

<sup>35</sup> See *Manhig* (Warsaw, 1885), pp. 109-110: *מנהג צרפת ופרובינצא ואלמניאה זולתי בארץ ספרד לומר בהושענה רבה מזמורים של שבת וקדושה רבה במוסף כשאר ימים טובים . . . וכן נהגו בצרפת להדליק נרות בהושענה רבה כבליל כפור*.

<sup>36</sup> והומיפו עליו למעטו בכל הדברים שהם אנינים של שמחה משנכנס . Now comp. *Tur*, 'Orah-Hayyim', ch. 951, where we find: *בתמוז מי"ז מבשר ויין מי"ז בתמוז*

abstain from meat during the nine fateful days preceding the ninth of Ab; and from various sources we learn that this was not a Spanish custom.

In ch. 290, our author speaks of sounding the Shofar during the month of Elul as a fixed institution, but this again was only a French minhag. The origin of this custom is to be found in a certain passage in the Chapters of R. Eliezer, and when the Rosh and the Tur, who wrote in Spain quote this passage they deem it necessary to remark that it was not a Spanish custom. In the same chapter, our author tells that it is customary to fast on the last day of the year, and we find in the Manhig that 'it is customary in all France, and among most of the scholars of Provence to fast on the day before Rosh ha-Shanah'.<sup>37</sup>

Thus we see that our author follows in all cases the ritual and the customs of France, very often in opposition to those of Spain. The inevitable conclusion therefore is that Isaac Aboab, the author of the Menorah, though of Spanish origin, as the name unmistakably implies,<sup>38</sup> lived and composed his work, not in Spain but in France. When that change of homes took place, we have no clue to speak with any amount of certainty. Perhaps in the latter

וַיֵּין וַאִילָךְ וּמִרְ"ח וַאִילָךְ נִמְנָעִים כּוֹלָם מִבָּשָׂר וַיֵּין. See also Rokeah, ch. 310. Abudraham clearly states: וּבֵאלוֹ הָאֲרָצוֹת לֹא פָשַׁט זֶה הַמִּנְהַג.

<sup>37</sup> See Manhig, p. 87: מִנְהַג צִרְפָּת לְהַתְחִיל מִרְ"ח אֵלּוּל וַאִילָךְ לְתַקּוֹעַ. בְּכָל יוֹם . . . לְכַךְ הִתְקִינוּ לְתַקּוֹעַ בִּרְ"ח אֵלּוּל וְהַצִּרְפָּתִים עוֹשִׂים אִף מִשָּׁם וַאִילָךְ. See also above, note 25. The Rosh (end of tract 'Rosh ha-Shanah'), Tur (ch. 981), and the לְדֶרֶךְ צִירָה (Warsaw, 1880, p. 227) also regard it as an Ashkenazic minhag. As to Aboab's statement: לְהַתְעַנּוֹת לְהַתְעַנּוֹת, בְּעֶרֶב ר"ה, we have the corresponding statement in the Manhig, p. 81: מִנְהַג כָּל צִרְפָּת וְרִיב חֲכָמֵי פְּרֻבִּינֶצָּא לְהַתְעַנּוֹת עֶרֶב ר"ה.

<sup>38</sup> See above, note 2.



part of the twelfth century, during the Almohade persecution, his ancestors left the Spanish peninsula and sought refuge in the North where, as Benjamin of Tudela reports, Jewish communities enjoyed peace and tranquillity. At all events Isaac Aboab lived and composed his Menorah on French soil. We are now prepared to deal with the problem of date. Having determined the 'where', let us see whether we cannot equally determine the 'when'.

### 3. DATE OF COMPOSITION.

Just a word, by way of introduction, on Zunz's brief essay on our subject. In my opinion it falls short of the standard of Zunz's other writings. Conclusions are so hastily drawn, arguments so unconvincing, that one instinctively asks: Did Zunz write it? That our author is not identical with Isaac Aboab, the Castilian, one of the Spanish exiles of 1492—he has proved well. But if the Menorah was not written at the end of the fifteenth century, why presume that it was written at the beginning of the fourteenth? He argues that from the introduction to our book, we gather that Aboab wrote two more works, one halakic and one ritualistic; and he asks: If the author lived at the end of the fifteenth century, how is it possible that the two works were lost? Now, even if we admit the major premise that works of the fifteenth century cannot be lost, we need not admit the minor premise that the two works were lost. They were not lost because they were never written. Indeed, he does not state that he wrote the two works, but that he intended to write them.<sup>39</sup> And as he began to compose the Menorah in his

<sup>39</sup> כיון שהתחלתי לדבר והסכמתי לחבר בדברי מדרש ואגדתא לא טוב להניח שמעתא . . . ע"כ בקוצר דעתי . . . אכתוב דעת הנאונים

later days,<sup>40</sup> is it not likely that he never realized his intention? Or take another argument of Zunz's. The Menorah never mentions the Ṭur by name, in spite of the parallel passages which are to be found in both works; consequently, the Menorah must have preceded the Ṭur. Now, first, if the Menorah preceded the Ṭur, why does not the Ṭur mention the Menorah? Secondly, we have seen that our author very often makes use of works without due acknowledgement. He incorporates, for example, Moses b. Naḥman's 'Iggeret ha-Ḳodesh' in his Menorah, yet we should not say that the Menorah preceded the Iggeret ha-Ḳodesh because there are parallel passages and he does not mention the latter by name. I think I have already proved that it was the Menorah which availed itself of the Ṭur, but did not openly refer to it, as it did not openly refer to Israel Alnaqua's 'Menorah'.

Zunz's position now being abandoned, what is our answer to the problem of date? In the light of the conclusions reached in our investigation into the sources of our book and into the place of its composition, the answer to this last problem is not far from sight. We have seen that the last work utilized by our author is Alnaqua's 'Menorah', which was written not long before 1391, the year before its author's martyrdom. Let that year be our *terminus a quo*. Let us see whether we cannot equally locate the *terminus ad quem*. We find the book mentioned

ופרושי הפרשנים אותם שראיתי ואזכה לראות בימים שעברו ובאות . . . ארון (i. e. the ואבנה המנורה בראשונה שהוא מבוא לאמצעית ולאחרונה (שולחן הפנים and the העתד).

על כן מלאני לבי לתת חלק אחר מאותו הזמן:  
שער הנה הייתי מתעסק במטרות העולם להגות בדבר זה שיהא קרבן בערי מכל ימי ביטולי.

<sup>40</sup> See introduction:

as early as Abraham Seba, who in his *צירור המור*,<sup>41</sup> referring to a certain midrashic passage, does not quote it himself but refers the reader to the Menorah—a fact indicating that the book enjoyed popularity as early as the end of the fifteenth century. The name of our book also occurs in a MS. dating from about 1500.<sup>42</sup> But the *terminus ad quem* can yet be moved a little nearer. Indeed the greater part of the fifteenth century must be excluded from the problematic territory. It is well known that the Kaddish originally bore no relation to the conception of death, but was a mere doxology recited after a talmudic discourse; but gradually some kabbalistic notions clustered around that prayer, and early in the fifteenth century it assumed a sombre aspect. It then became customary for the orphans to recite it daily for eleven months after the passing away of a father or a mother. In the works of Isaac b. Sheshet Barfat and in the Kol Bo, we find the beginnings of this custom; yet if we search the Menorah thoroughly we find no trace of the Mourner's Kaddish. The Kaddish is indeed mentioned and commented upon, but only in its original doxological significance. Moreover, Aboab speaks of how children can save their parents from the throes of Hell (ch. 27)—would it not be appropriate there to speak of the Kaddish? He quotes rather at length the legend about Akiba who met a ghost running impetuously, bent under a heavy load of wood to feed the tongues of flame in Gehenna which consumed him daily, and Akiba is told by the dead man that no one could save him except his son by the repetition of Bareku (ch. 9). Now in the course of time, this legend was so modified as to include the Kaddish as equally

<sup>41</sup> Sefer Debarim, p. 129.

<sup>42</sup> See *Ritus*, p. 210.

possessing the power to redeem the dead, and was therefore made the origin of the institution of the Mourner's Kaddish.<sup>43</sup> Why is Aboab silent about it in this connexion? I think this is more than an *argumentum e silentio*.

Thus our problematic territory cannot embrace more than the last part of the fourteenth century and the earlier part of the fifteenth. And when we remember that Aboab lived in France, where no Jews were found from 1394, the year of the Expulsion, to 1426, we finally reach the conclusion that Aboab must have lived at the latter part of the fourteenth century.<sup>44</sup> He probably lived in Paris where French Judaism was then centred, and where the Jews lived peacefully and unmolested under the reign of Charles V, the kind monarch who was said to be enamored of a Jewish maiden. Thus when Aboab writes אבל עתה (שעושים בני אדם כל ימיהם כחגים ושותים לשובע בכל יום קל"ז) the words cannot refer to Spain,<sup>45</sup> nor to Germany, where Jewish suffering was so intense that its very tale is heart-rending, but only to French Judaism and to that particular time when there was yet peace for the Jews and light, though only like the pale light of the wintry sun soon to disappear in a cold long night of infinite darkness.

But while the fortune of worldly goods smiled upon the Jews of France, there was spiritual and intellectual lethargy in the very land of Rashi and the Tosafists. True, a certain scholar named Mattathiah b. Joseph who succeeded to be

<sup>43</sup> Cf. אור זרוע, II, 6, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Our supposition, above in note 2, that our author was the son of R. Abraham Aboab, meets therefore with no objection in point of time.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Hasdai Crescas's letter to the Jewish community of Perpignan. See also introduction to צידה לדרך.

the favourite of the king, and was exempted from wearing the badge of shame,<sup>46</sup> tried to institute academies in France and to spread talmudic lore; and some talmudic MSS. that had been confiscated were returned by the king to the Jews; yet as there was no general, hearty craving for halakic studies, all attempts failed. 'What shall be done at this time', our author asks wailingly, 'when owing to our sins the academies consecrated to learning are decreasing?' (ch. 244); again, in ch. 270, he writes: 'What shall be done at this time when owing to our sins knowledge is rare and the sages of Israel are few and far between? At last Aboab conceived a scheme of saving French Judaism. He abandoned his worldly pursuits and betook himself to the pulpit.<sup>47</sup> The halakah became unintelligible

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Charles's 'Ordonances', V, 498: 'Exceptez tant seulment . . . Maistre Mattathia et sa mere et Abraham son fils'. Isaac b. Sheshet also speaks of Mattathiah as a favourite of the king, as well as of his attempts to open talmudical academies. See his Responsa, 270.

<sup>47</sup> That preaching was now his vocation is evident from what he says in the introduction: וּגַם לַעֲיִן בּוֹ בִקְצֵר וּבְלִי עֵמֶל כִּשְׂאֻמְרֵךְ לְרֹשׁוֹ, and also from what he says in the epilogue; כִּי שְׁלֵא אֲצֻמְרֵךְ . . . רְצִיתִי לְטָרוֹחַ. He furthermore states that he did not introduce any material unfit 'either to be taught or to be preached in public'. It is to be noted that sermons occupied no leading position in French Jewry of that time, for two reasons: (1) their ritual was too elaborate to allow ample time for the preacher; (2) the French Rabbis were too much engrossed in pilpulistic studies. See Zunz, *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*, ch. 22. We can now understand why Aboab spoke so complainingly of pilpulistic Halakah and casuistry. It is furthermore to be noted that while the Menorah is merely a collection of material for sermons, it is clear from the paucity of biblical interpretations, that Aboab's sermons bore a greater resemblance to the French model which was a mere string of Midrashim and Haggadahs, than to the more elaborate Spanish model like Anatoli's and Nahmanides' and Nissim Gerundi's, the basis of which is a scriptural text and the rest is commentary. The Spanish type was exegetic, based on the Bible; the French type was an independent moral

to the masses, but there is yet enough in the haggadah to convey to all, young and old, men and women, the moral quintessence, the ethics of Judaism. To those he could reach by the living word, he preached; for others, he composed his Menorat ha-Maor. Suddenly, however, in 1394, the Jews were ordered to leave France, and French Judaism came to an abrupt ending. And yet, thinking of the number of editions which the book was privileged to see,<sup>48</sup> and considering that down to our own day it served as a spiritual guide for the Jewish woman, the workman, the rank and file of Israel, we can realize our enormous indebtedness for the historic continuity of Jewish learning and Jewish morals, to the author of the Menorah, Isaac Aboab.

discourse, interwoven with stories and sayings gleaned from post-biblical literature. Aboab's sermons were of the French type.

<sup>48</sup> See the Bodleian Catalogue, p. 1071.